DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 216 758 JC 820 263

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TITLE The Reverse Transfer Phenomenon at Piedmont Virginia Community College, Fall Quarter, 1981. Research Report No. 3-82.
INSTITUTION Piedmont Virginia Community Coll., Charlottesville, Va.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 18p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age; *College Transfer Students; Community Colleges; Degrees (Academic); Demand Occupations; *Educational Attainment; Females; Males; Minority Groups; Questionnaires; *Student Characteristics; *Student Educational Objectives; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS *Reverse Transfer Students

ABSTRACT

In fall 1981, a study was conducted to investigate the reverse transfer phenomenon at Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC). Specifically, the study sought to determine: (1) the proportion of PVCC students who had already obtained a certificate, or an associate, bachelor's or graduate degree; (2) the demographic characteristics of these certificate or degree holders; (3) their reasons for attending PVCC as compared to the reasons given by non-degree holders; and (4) differences between degree holders and non-degree holders enrolled in programs associated with high employability. Questionnaires were administered to a random sample of fall 1981 class sections and to all sections in the data processing, accounting, electronics, nursing, and respiratory therapy programs. Responses from 94% of the classes surveyed revealed that about 25% of the fall 1981 student body (on a full-time equivalent basis) had already received a degree or certificate from an institution of higher education, with 13% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The proportion of students with a bachelor's degree or above in programs associated with high employability was significantly higher than the proportion in the student body in general. Making more money, getting a better job, and learning things of interest were consistently identified as important reasons for attending PBCC among degree holders and non-degree holders. The questionnaire is appended. (AYC)

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ED216758

The Reverse Transfer Phenomenon

at

Piedmont Virginia Community College

Fall Quarter, 1981

PIEDMONT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Charlottesville, Virginia

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By: Dr. Robert A. Ross

RESEARCH REPORT NO. 3-82

Office of Institutional Research
and Planning

JC 820 263

The Reverse Transfer Phenomenon at
Piedmont Virginia Community College,
Fall Quarter 1981

Background and Purpose

In order to better understand the composition and motivation of the student body at Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC), descriptive studies are regularly undertaken by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. One dimension by which students can be categorized is their previous educational attainment prior to coming to PVCC. No formal study of that characteristic of students had been made at the College, although the subject had been discussed and it was generally understood that a goodly portion of the students had attained at least one degree or certificate from an institution of higher education prior to enrolling at PVCC.

The College President and his staff were interested in reasons why persons who already had a degree would come to PVCC. It was conjectured that degree holders who graduated in fields popularly characterized as having relatively low demand in the job market, eg a BA in English Literature, might be coming to PVCC to attain a "hard skill", eg accounting or data processing, in order to increase their employability. If this tentative hypothesis were in fact the case, then one could expect those persons to indicate reasons for coming to PVCC like, "make more money," or "get a better job" and one would also expect the reverse transfer students (those who hold previous degrees) to be concentrated in the subjects currently associated with high employability.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reverse transfer phenomonon at PVCC to determine the characteristics of returning degree holders and their motivations.

Methodology

The following research questions were formulated and coordinated with the College President and his staff:

1a. What proportion of PVCC students have already earned a degree or certificate from an institution of higher education?

1b. What proportion of these hold associate degrees or certificates?

1c. What proportion of these hold bachelors or graduate degrees?

1d. What are the demographic characteristics of these degree and certificate holders?

2a. Do the reasons given for attending PVCC differ between those students who already hold a degree or certificate and those who have no degree or certificate?

2b. Are there important interactions observed between reasons given for attending PVCC by degree holders and non-degree holders when examined by discrete demographic characteristics?

3. Concerning the disciplines of data processing, accounting, electronics[1], nursing and respiratory therapy:

   a. For each discipline, is the proportion of students with degrees or certificates higher than the proportion in the general student population.

   b. Do the reasons given for attending PVCC differ when degree/certificate holders in the above disciplines are compared to degree/certificate holders in the general student population.

   c. Do the reasons given for attending PVCC differ when non-degree/certificate holders in the above disciplines are compared to non-degree/certificate holders in the general student population?

A one-page questionnaire was developed and coordinated with the President and his staff. The reasons for attending section of the questionnaire was adapted from a questionnaire used to support a North Carolina community college study, and was used with the permission of one of the authors of that study.[2] A copy of the questionnaire employed in this study is appended to this report. (See Appendix A)

A sample of sections was drawn from all of the sections taught Fall Quarter 1981 at PVCC, using a systematic random sample. The sample was checked to make sure a proportionally representative number of night and off-campus sections had been included in the sample.

The questionnaire was forwarded to faculty members teaching each of those sections, and they were asked to administer the questionnaires and return them to the Coordinator of Institutional Research and Planning. A copy of the letter of instruction is appended to this report. (See Appendix B)

Additionally, questionnaires were sent to all sections of the following disciplines; accounting, nursing, respiratory therapy, electronics and all data processing sections except for sections of the introductory data processing courses.

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[1]Electronics was later deleted.

[2]Ronald W. Shearon, Robert G. Templin, Jr., David E. Daniel, Lee McGraw Huffman and Russell F. West, Putting Learning To Work A Profile of Students in North Carolina Community Colleges, Technical Institutes and Technical Colleges A Technical Report Dept. of Adult and Community College Education, North Carolina State University, Raleigh: 1980, p. 171.

Results

The splendid cooperation of the faculty led to a very high (94%) response rate on a section-by-section basis. One history section did not respond and two PSI accounting sections and two cooperative education accounting sections were not surveyed. The response rate of students within sections cannot be determined, since absentee records were not kept and also because respondents were instructed to complete the questionnaire only once--even if it was handed out to them in several different classes.

The survey of the general student population is not representative of the 1981 fall headcount student population of PVCC. Since full-time students take more courses than do part-time students, the probability of a particular student being in one of the randomly selected sections was greater if that student was full-time than if that student was part-time. Therefore the data collected are biased in favor of a disproportional emphasis on responses from full-time students. Since this bias is directly related to student course load (the more courses taken, the more likely to be surveyed) and since credit-hour generation shares that same biased relationship between Full-Time Equivalent Students (FTES) and headcount students (one full-time student generates more FTES than does one part-time student), the data collected concerning the general student population may be treated conceptually as fairly representative of FTE students of PVCC in the Fall Quarter 1981.

The results of surveying the electronics sections produced too few student responses to make analysis of those data worthwhile. Therefore, Research Question 3 was modified by the deletion of electronics as a separate discipline to be addressed.

Since the specific disciplines were addressed by sending questionnaires to all sections in that discipline (except in data processing where introductory sections were not included in the 100% sample), the results are generally representative of students taking courses in those disciplines. In the case of nursing and respiratory therapy, the results can be described as representative of students in those programs because in general only students admitted to those programs are permitted to enroll in the nursing and respiratory therapy courses. The accounting and data processing results are representative of students taking accounting and advanced data processing courses. No claim can be made that the results are representative of persons in those programs because people not in those programs can and do enroll in accounting and advanced data processing courses.

The reader must remember, in making any comparison between the results obtained for the general student body and for a specific discipline, that the data describing the general student body approximates an FTE student while the data for a specific discipline is representative of a headcount student.

Question 1. In general about 25% of the PVCC Fall 1981 student body (on an FTE basis)* had already received a degree or certificate from an institution of higher education. Table 1 summarizes the results by degree level and gender.

Table 1
General Student Body
Degree Level and Gender
(Missing Observations = 10)

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
High School Graduate or Less Education	174 (31%)	242 (44%)	416 (75%)
Certificate or Diploma from Institution of Higher Education	10 (2%)	22 (4%)	32 (6%)
Associate Degree	9 (2%)	22 (4%)	31 (6%)
Bachelor's Degree	19 (3%)	33 (6%)	52 (9%)
Master's Degree	6 (1%)	12 (2%)	18 (3%)
Doctorate	5 (1%)	0 (0%)	5 (1%)
TOTAL	223 (40%)	331 (60%)	554 (100%)

*When describing the general student body throughout this report it is understood that the report refers to characteristics typical of FTE students.

Table 2 compares the sample of the general student body to the overall characteristics of all students for that fall quarter. Each comparison appears to support the previously made observation that the sampling technique is biased in favor of full-time students.

Table 2
Comparison of Sample with Population
Fall Quarter 1981 (Age data for
The Population is Fall Quarter 1980)

	Sample	Population	Holders of Bachelor Degree and Higher Degrees*
Male	40.4%	37.5%	40.0%
Female	59.6%	62.5%	60.0%
Under 22	43%	27%	0%
22-24	12%	14%	17%
25-34	31%	34%	59%
35-44	8%	16%	17%
45+	5%	10%	8%
Black	12.4%	8.8%	0%
White	84.9%	89.2%	96%
Other	2.7%	2.0%	5%
Charlottesville	35.2%	31.0%	31%
Albemarle	41.8%	37.8%	52%
Other in-region	15.4%	25.8%	11%
Out of Region	7.6%	5.4%	7%

NOTE: Some percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

*Percentages based on sample data.

Upon reviewing the interactions some interesting relationships emerged. Table 3 shows that those respondents who had the educational level of completed high school or less 49% rated to improve my social life as important. Of that group the males rated that reason as important 57% of the time while the female respondents rated it important only 42% of the time.

For the holders of bachelor or higher degrees 72% of them rated to get a better job as important. The female bachelor or higher degree holders rated that reason important 80% of the time compared to 60% for the male respondents.

Question 2. Table 3 provides the percentages of respondents from the general student body sample who rated reasons for attending PVCC as of some importance or as very important. The respondents are categorized by educational level.

As one would expect, the reason to improve my reading and study skills was rated important less often by people who had an associate degree or certificate and much less often by bachelor or higher degree holders.

The bachelor and higher degree holders rated the reason to gain a general education lower than did the others. This was expected, but the associate and certificate degree holders did not reflect the same low importance for that reason.

Becoming more cultured and contributing more to society were less important reasons for bachelor and higher degree holders than they were for the other respondents.

Table 3
Educational Level Comparisons Among
Reasons for Attending PVCC
Selected as Being of Some Importance
or Very Important Fall Quarter 1981

Reason		Percent of Respondents Selecting The Reason as Being of Some Importance or Very Important			
		General Respondents	High School or less	Associate or Certificate	Bachelor or Higher
To learn more things of interest	8	91%	92%	92%	84%
To be able to earn more money	2	88%	90%	90%	76%
To get a better job	5	88%	92%	86%	72%
To gain a general education	4	88%	93%	90%	56%
To be able to contribute more to society	1	78%	81%	81%	53%
To become more cultured	3	74%	79%	73%	45%
To improve my reading and study skills	6	72%	81%	65%	28%
To meet interesting people	9	64%	72%	65%	53%
To improve my social life	7	44%	49%	37%	21%
Parents (or spouse) wanted me to go	10	28%	36%	19%	3%

Table 4
Demographic Comparison Among
Reasons For Attending PVCC
Selected ar Being of Some Importance
or Very Important Fall Quarter 1981

Reason		Percent of Respondents Selecting The Reason as Being of Some Importance or Very Important						
		General Respondents	Females	Males	White	Black	Age 24 or Less	Age 25 or More
To learn more things of interest	8	91%	92%	89%	91%	91%	93%	88%
To be able to earn more money	2	88%	88%	89%	89%	91%	90%	86%
To get a better job	5	88%	89%	87%	89%	92%	92%	84%
To gain a general education	4	88%	88%	87%	88%	92%	93%	82%
To be able to contribute more to society	1	78%	77%	79%	80%	84%	91%	73%
To become more cultured	3	74%	73%	75%	73%	84%	79%	67%
To improve my reading and study skills	6	72%	70%	74%	70%	88%	80%	61%
To meet interesting people	9	64%	70%	68%	71%	70%	75%	61%
To improve my social life	7	44%	38%	52%	42%	58%	50%	36%
Parents (or spouse) wanted me to go	10	28%	28%	29%	28%	34%	40%	12%

Table 4 addresses the same reasons in the same order as Table 3. The reasons are categorized by three demographic dimensions in Table 4, sex, race, and age.

There did not appear to be important differences in reasons for attending PVCC between males and females. The largest difference observed was that males rated improving their social life as an important reason for attending more often than did females.

Blacks rated improving reading and study skills as important more often than did white students. Improving social life and attending in response to parent or spouse encouragement were also rated as being somewhat more important by Blacks.

The age dimension produced more contrasts. In general the more elderly group selected fewer reasons as important, resulting in lower percentages across-the-board. However, three reasons were about 20 percentage points less important for the older group (25 and over):

- To be able to contribute more to society.*
- To improve my reading and study skills.
- Parents (or spouse) wanted me to go.

The older group also rated two other reasons 14 percentage points less important than the younger respondents:

- To meet interesting people
- To improve my social life.

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*Templin observes that in his North Carolina study the desire to contribute to society is characteristic of both the young group and the senior citizens. My data lacked sufficient respondents of retirement age to confirm the latter tendency. See previous footnote.

Question 3. Table 5 contains some characteristics of the different disciplines compared with the general student body. Recall the previous warning concerning comparisons between discipline data and general student data.

Table 5
Comparisons of Characteristics
of Selected Disciplines (HC) and
the General Student (FTE)
(Percentages in each category)

		High School -	Assoc/ Certi.	Bachelor +	Total
Respiratory	Female	10	5	48	62
Therapy	Male	19	14	5	38
Students	Total	29	19	53	100
Nursing	Female	65	3	22	90
	Male	5	0	5	10
Students	Total	70	3	27	100
Advanced	Female	37	6	14	57
Data	Male	23	3	15	43
Processing	Total	60	9	29	100
Accounting	Female	56	5	15	76
Students	Male	18	2	4	24
Except PSI	Total	74	7	19	100
Student	Female	44	8	8	60
Body in	Male	31	3	6	40
General	Total	75	11	14	100

Tables 6, 7 and 8 provide comparisons between the reasons for attending PVCC considered important by the respondents and the several categories of respondents: general student body, data processing, nursing and respiratory therapy. Table 6 addresses high school graduates including those with less educational attainment, Table 7 addresses the holders of associate degrees and certificates, and Table 8 contains data on respondents holding bachelor's degrees and above.

The following comments highlight relationships considered interesting by the author:

Of the top three reasons listed, learn more things, earn more money and get a better job the specific disciplines generally resembled the general student body except in the instance of bachelor's degree holders who appeared to rank get a better job consistently higher than the general respondents. Except for the Data Processing respondents, getting a better job was (or tied for) top position.

Getting a general education was rated less important by high school students studying accounting and bachelor's degree holders studying respiratory therapy. (The latter rating percentage may be distorted by the small number of respondents in that category).

The ability to contribute more to society was seen as an important reason by those in the health sciences.

Among the bachelor's degree holders, that six out of ten nursing students indicated improving reading and study skills as important provided a surprise, even though the number of respondents is too small to draw conclusions from that information.

The respondents in the health sciences who already had bachelor's degrees seemed to rate the influence of parent or spouse as more important than did the general student population or other disciplines.

Table 9 repeats the data contained in Tables 6, 7, and 8 but groups the information by discipline so that comparisons among different educational levels within disciplines can conveniently be made.

Table 6

Comparisons Among Respondents
Holding High School Diplomas or Less
Fall Quarter 1981

Reason		Percent of Respondents Selecting The Reason As Being of Some Importance or Very Important				
		General Respondents	Accounting	Data Processing	Nursing	Respirato Therapy
To learn more things of interest	8	92%	91%	91%	81%	100%
To be able to earn more money	1	90%	91%	95%	96%	100%
To get a better job	5	92%	91%	94%	89%	100%
To gain a general education	4	93%	63%	82%	96%	100%
To be able to contribute more to society	1	81%	71%	64%	92%	83%
To become more cultured	3	79%	70%	66%	73%	83%
To improve my reading and study skills	6	81%	73%	71%	69%	67%
To meet interesting people	9	72%	64%	67%	69%	100%
To improve my social life	7	49%	38%	43%	27%	33%
Parents (or spouse) wanted me to go	10	36%	22%	28%	12%	33%
		N = 416	N = 194	N = 106	N = 26	N =

Table 7
Comparisons Among Respondents
Holding Associate Degrees or
Certificates, Fall Quarter 1981

Reason		Percent of Respondents Selecting The Reason as Being of Some Importance or Very Important				
		General Respondents	Accounting	Data Processing	Nursing	Respira Thera
To learn more things of interest	8	92%	89%	88%	*	100%
To be able to earn more money	2	90%	83%	77%	*	100%
To get a better job	5	86%	78%	82%	*	100%
To gain a general education	4	90%	90%	88%	*	100%
To be able to contribute more to society	1	81%	67%	82%	*	100%
To become more cultured	3	73%	61%	77%	*	75%
To improve my reading and study skills	6	65%	61%	53%	*	75%
To meet interesting people	9	65%	56%	65%	*	50%
To improve my social life	7	37%	44%	29%	*	50%
Parents (or spouse) wnated me to go	10	19%	0%	18%	*	0%
		N = 63	N = 18	N = 17	N = 1	N =

*Omited to avoid disclosing individual responses.

Table 8
Comparisons Among Respondents
Holding Bachelor's Degrees or
Higher, Fall Quarter 1981

Reason		Percent of Respondents Selecting The Reason as Being of Some Importance or Very Important				
		General Respondents	Accounting	Data Processing	Nursing	Respiratory Therapy
To learn more things of interest	8	84%	84%	90%	100%	86%
To be able to earn more money	2	76%	82%	89%	100%	91%
To get a better job	5	72%	88%	83%	100%	91%
To gain a general education	4	56%	47%	54%	50%	36%
To be able to contribute more to society	1	53%	39%	52%	100%	82%
To become more cultured	3	45%	49%	42%	50%	100%
To improve my reading and study skills	6	28%	27%	19%	60%	18%
To meet interesting people	9	53%	43%	40%	20%	64%
To improve my social life	7	21%	16%	15%	40%	62%
Parents (or spouse) wanted me to go	10	3%	2%	2%	30%	9%
		N = 75	N = 49	N = 52	N = 10	N = 11

Table 9
Reasons for Attending PVCC
Fall Quarter 1981 Organized by Specific
Discipline and Educational Attainment
Within Discipline

		ACCOUNTING			DATA PROCESSING			NURSING			RESPIRATORY THERAPY		
		HS(-)	ASSOC	BACH(+)	HS(-	ASSOC	BACH(+)	HS(-)	ASSOC	BACH(+)	HS(-)	ASSOC	BACH(+)
To learn more things of interest	8	91%	89%	84%	91%	88%	90%	81%	*	100%	100%	100%	86%
To be able to earn more money	2	91%	83%	82%	95%	77%	89%	96%	*	100%	100%	100%	91%
To get a better job	5	91%	78%	88%	94%	82%	83%	89%	*	100%	100%	100%	91%
To gain a general education	4	63%	90%	47%	82%	88%	54%	96%	*	50%	100%	100%	36%
To be able to contribute more to society	1	71%	67%	39%	64%	82%	52%	92%	*	100%	83%	100%	82%
To become more cultured	3	70%	61%	49%	66%	77%	42%	73%	*	50%	83%	75%	100%
To improve my reading and study skills	6	73%	61%	27%	71%	53%	19%	69%	*	60%	67%	75%	18%
To meet interesting people	9	64%	56%	43%	67%	65%	40%	69%	*	20%	100%	50%	64%
To improve my social life	7	38%	44%	16%	43%	29%	15%	27%	*	40%	33%	50%	62%
Parents (or spouse) wanted me to go	10	22%	0%	2%	28%	18%	2%	12%	*	30%	33%	0%	9%
		N = 194	N = 18	N = 49	N = 106	N = 17	N = 52	N = 26	N = 1	N = 10	N = 6	N = 4	N = 11

*Omited to avoid disclosing individual response

Conclusions

Approximately one-quarter of the courses taken at PVCC are taken by persons who have already attained a degree or certificate from an institution of higher education. Of these, the marjority have a bachelor's degree or higher.

The reasons for attending PVCC indicated as important by the respondents showed strong similarities across a wide range of demographic dimensions including age, race, sex and level of educational attainment. The observed differences are identified in the body of this report. Concerning reasons for attending PVCC it appears clear that bachelor's and higher degree holders do not attend to gain a general education nor to improve reading and study skills and that there appear to be relationships between the age of the respondent and his or her reasons for attending PVCC.

Making more money and getting a better job were consistently identified as important reasons for attending this institution. Learning things of interest consistently ranked as high or higher than those two reasons.

APPENDIX A

PIEDMONT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SURVEY OF STUDENTS, FALL QUARTER, 1981

This is a survey of selected classes to determine the frequency with which persons who already hold a degree from an institution of higher education come to PVCC to pursue further goals.

****

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED ONE OF THESE QUESTIONNAIRES IN ANOTHER CLASS, PLEASE DO NOT FILL OUT THIS ONE.

****

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

What is this class name and number (including section number):_____

Your age in years (to nearest birthday):_____

Sex (Circle): Male Female Race (Circle): Black White Other

Residence (City or County) while attending PVCC:_____

Employment Status (Circle): Employed Full-time Employed Part-time Unemployed

Marital Status (Circle): Single Married Other

If you are enrolled in a specific program of study at PVCC, please indicate the name of the program:_____

Degree or Academic Award (Please Indicate Those Earned By You)	Major Field of Study (Please List For Each Degree Earned By You)	Year Of Graduation
___Certificate from a two-year college.....	_____	_____
___Certificate from a four-year college.....	_____	_____
___Diploma.....	_____	_____
___Associate Degree.....	_____	_____
___Bachelor's Degree.....	_____	_____
___Master's Degree.....	_____	_____
___First Professional Degree (medicine, law, etc.).....	_____	_____
___Doctorate or other terminal degree.....	_____	_____

Please indicate the importance of the reasons you are attending PVCC with a check made on the scale opposite each reason:

Reasons:	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	OF SOME IMPORTANCE	VERY IMPORTANT
To be able to contribute more to society...	_____	_____	_____
To be able to earn more money.....	_____	_____	_____
To become more cultured.....	_____	_____	_____
To gain a general education.....	_____	_____	_____
To get a better job.....	_____	_____	_____
To improve my reading and study skills.....	_____	_____	_____
To improve my social life.....	_____	_____	_____
To learn more things of interest.....	_____	_____	_____
To meet interesting people.....	_____	_____	_____
Parents (or spouse) wanted me to go.....	_____	_____	_____
There was nothing better to do.....	_____	_____	_____
Other_____.....	_____	_____	_____

(Please state any other reason for your attending PVCC and indicate its importance to your decision to attend PVCC)

END OF SURVEY THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

APPENDIX B

PIEDMONT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ROUTE 6, BOX 1A, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22901, TEL. 804/977-3900

MEMORANDUM

TO:

FROM: Dr. Robert G. Templin, Jr., Dean of Instruction
Dr. Robert A. Rossi, Coordinator of Institutional Research and Planning

DATE: October 28, 1981

SUBJECT: Survey of Students in Selected Courses and Sections

In order to examine the extent to which PVCC is serving students who have already received a degree or certificate we are asking that you administer the enclosed survey to the students enrolled in the following section(s).

The sections were selected by a process designed to provide a representative cross-section of the College. In addition to the sample of sections drawn at random all accounting sections and all advanced level data processing sections are also being surveyed.

Please distribute the enclosed questionnaire to members of each section indicated above and collect it after the students have responded to it. Our experience indicated this will require about four to five minutes. As the instructions on the questionnaire indicate, students who have completed the survey in another class should not complete the questionnaire a second time. The completed survey forms should be kept together by section and either forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Instruction or the Office of Institutional Research and Planning.

We hope to have the entire survey completed by November 17, 1981 so that we can start the analysis of the data at that time.

Thank you for your cooperation.

RAR/lbrW

Enclosure

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